

(1) IS Emergence...

renewed hope for the peace process with the Taliban.

In a debate on Afghanistan's situation at the UN Security Council where the UNAMA mandate was also extended for another year in the country, Haysom opened the debate, lauding the Afghan government's efforts for peace talks with the Taliban.

"These positive developments are a testament to the efforts of President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah," Haysom praised. "Their collaborative leadership remains essential for any peace talks to progress." He assured that UNAMA would continue to assist the parties to the conflict to reach a sustainable peace. Touching on the electoral reforms, the UN top envoy stressed the need for reforms in order to restore people's trust in the National Unity Government (NUG).

"Comprehensive electoral reforms will be essential to restoring the faith of the Afghan people in the democratic process and strengthening political stability," Haysom said, welcoming Ghani's renewed commitment to establish the commission shortly.

Russia's Deputy Ambassador Vladimir Safonkov said his country was worried about the increasing terrorist threat in Afghanistan and broadening of the Islamic State's geographical activities.

Extremists in northern Afghanistan, bordering several former Soviet states, were actively engaging in propaganda and recruiting besides setting up camps, the envoy noted.

He added: "The states of the region have legitimate concerns about this turn of events. Turning it into yet another safe haven for fighters and extremists is categorically unacceptable." (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghanistan, Kazak...

violent collision of the Indian subcontinent with Asia.

The report further added that Afghanistan may hold 60 million tons of copper, 2.2 billion tons of iron ore, 1.4 million tons of rare earth elements such as lanthanum, cerium and neodymium, and lodes of aluminum, gold, silver, zinc, mercury and lithium.

In the meantime, Eugene Gerden in his report for Investor Intel, stated that one of the most valuable metal that was discovered in the country's territory is praseodymium, which is a silver metal that is used in the manufacture of specialty glasses and for the improvement of the properties of some alloys.

Among the other discovered rare earth metals are cerium, which is actively used in metallurgy, as well as lanthanum, neodymium, samarium and gadolinium, the report added.

Gerden is an international freelance writer, based in St. Petersburg, who specializes on writing in the field of mining, metals and rare earth metals and has worked as a senior analyst in the department of mining of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources for three years after graduation of the geology department of the St. Petersburg State University.

Afghanistan's mineral resources were valued at \$908 billion by U.S. Department of Defense's Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) in 2010. However, Afghan government's estimate is \$3 trillion.

The resources provide the potential for Afghanistan to develop its economy, to create jobs and build infrastructure, as it goes into the future and lift Afghanistan out of poverty and fight crime and terrorism. (KP)

(3) Accord

a joint statement after Monday's meeting in Peshawar.

Afghan Ambassador Janan Mosazai, KP Chief Minister Pervaiz Khattak, Speaker Asad Qaiser and prominent political leaders of the province were also in attendance. Leader of Opposition Maulana Lutfur Rehman, QWP member Sikandar Sherpao, provincial ministers Shahram Tarakai, Inayatullah Khan, Mushtaq Ghani and other lawmakers were also present.

The ambassador said a delegation of Afghan military officers would visit Peshawar and Quetta soon to forge cooperation against terrorists. However, he gave no dates.

The neighbours vowed cooperation in the more efficient use of water resources and in areas of education, research, agriculture and industry. A special mechanism would be created to promote trade, investment between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(4) Not to Pull Troops ...

from Iraq in 2011 was a dangerous mistake.

"I think it was a pretty critical error, he ignored the advice of his entire foreign policy team, this failure is squarely on the president's head," Dr Nagl said.

Speaking to The World Today program from Philadelphia, Dr Nagl said the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US was a mistake, but the counterinsurgency efforts that followed the flawed invasion were working before the troops were pulled out. If we pull all American troops out of Afghanistan, we will have the Taliban at the gates of Kabul within three years, just as we had ISIS at the gates of Baghdad three years after pulling out all American troops from Iraq.

"Having invaded Iraq unnecessarily and badly we did ultimately develop a counterinsurgency strategy," he said.

"It succeeded, and so by the end of 2011 the United States was in a position where Iraq — had we left some residual force of some 15-20,000 American advisors — could have endured as a state with a foreign policy, probably speaking in the interest of the United States.

"Everyone — secretary of state Clinton, secretary of defence Gates, director of the central intelligence agency Panetta, central command commander David Petraeus, president of the think tank John Nagl — said keep 20,000 American troops there forever or the Islamic State, at that point we called it Al Qaeda in Iraq, will come back. (Agencies)

(5) Obama Consulting...

added Obama would listen carefully to advice from his national security team and military commanders on the pace of the drawdown.

Earnest said by the beginning of 2017, the president envisioned a scenario where the US military presence in Afghanistan would be substantially reduced to a Kabul-centric presence: protecting the embassy and focused on military coordination and cooperation.

"That would represent a substantial drawdown in the number of troops then from what our presence looked like even just a couple of years ago," he continued.

Secretary of State John Kerry will host President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and key members of the Afghan government at Camp David on March 23.

They will discuss a range of issues including security, economic development and the Afghan-led reconciliation process. Kerry will be joined by Cabinet-level officials including Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, Secretary of Treasury Jacob J. Lew and others. (Pajhwok)

(6) Protestors...

Ghazni had confirmed some of the hostages had been moved to the province from Zabul.

One of the protestors, Ali Riza, told Pajhwok Afghan News the government should intensify its efforts at securing the release of the abducted Hazara men.

"We have no opposition with anyone. The abducted men are innocent and should be free," Riza, a member of the minority ethnic Hazara community, said.

The demonstrators, who gathered in front of the Governor's House in Ghazni City, issued a resolution that called the kidnapping of innocent people as un-Islamic. It asked the government to take serious steps for the safe release of the hostages.

Days after the abduction, Afghan security forces launched a rescue operation on March 2, but the forces had been unable so far to locate the whereabouts of the hostages.

Ghazni officials said the hostages had been divided into five groups and some of them had been brought to Nawa, Gilan and Ab Band districts the province from Zabul. (Pajhwok)

(7) Afghanistan ...

be a good place for a woman to be." She noted that currently the Afghan women were playing a major role in economic, political and social sectors.

Rejecting concerns that women's situation would deteriorate in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of foreign troops; Ghani stated that she was hopeful about the women's future in the war-torn country.

"There are a lot of very strong women," Ghani replied when asked if she was the reason for the optimism. She hoped the Afghan women would never return to their past.

The National Unity Government (NUG) had better programs to improve the situation of women, she said, adding that the implementation of such programs would change the course of history for women of the country.

Women in Afghanistan have suffered from several types of violence including forced and underage marriages, domestic violence, rape, and honor killings. (Tolonews)

(8) Iran Reiterates...

on 'The Situation in Afghanistan' on Monday.

I would like to express my appreciations to you for holding this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to Thank Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement, as well as Mr. Nicholas Haysom Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for his report.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its deep cultural and historical ties with Afghanistan, has always supported peace, stability, security and socio-economic development in Afghanistan. To us, security in Afghanistan is tantamount to security in our borders and in the Region.

Iran was among the first who welcomed the formation of the national unity Government in Afghanistan with Dr. Ashraf Ghani as its President and Dr. Abdullah as its Chief Executive. Having assumed full leadership, Afghanistan has now entered a very crucial pathway of transformation. Strong and visionary leadership taken by the new government would address current challenges in a sustainable, strategic and consistent manner. We are confident that the National unity Government is best positioned to face major challenges of peace and development.

The latest Secretary General's report on Afghanistan that is indicative of possible increase in armed attacks and violence in the coming summer season, should be a matter of deep concern to us and all countries in the Region. Insecurity, instability and poverty provide the most fertile grounds for rapid growth and reemergence of violent extremist groups and, even now footholds for the ISIL in Afghanistan, as referred to by SRSG Haysom.

Unfortunately, the report shows that the number of terrorist activities has been increased during the recent months. We condemn all violent attacks committed by these terrorist groups as well as any cooperation with them, since we believe this will embolden them in their odious behavior and will be counterproductive to establishing peace in Afghanistan.

On the important question of security arrangements and the activities of the foreign troops, including Resolute Support Mission (RSM), we believe this should be with full consent and in constant consultation with the Government. This is a vital requirement to demonstrate the strong commitment of the international community to respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan.

On bilateral cooperation, the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited Kabul on 20 January and discussed issues of common interest such as Security cooperation and establishing bilateral strategic cooperation between two countries. This visit was preceded by the 15 December signing in Tehran, of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Commander of the Iranian Border Guards and his Afghan counterpart, to enhance cooperation in countering terrorism and drug trafficking. Iran stands ready to increase its bilateral cooperation, particularly on security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, developing projects and economic cooperation in the fields of infrastructures and agriculture as well as durable solution for Afghan refugees.

There are also great potentials to explore in the fields of trade and transit. To complete the Railroad project between Harat and khaf city in Iran and Iran's readiness to make available its port facilities in Chabahar, which we believe is very useful for Afghanistan as a land locked country, are two ongoing examples in this regard. The tripartite agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran needs to be finalized in order to move forward with the latter. On the Counter-narcotics efforts, we are particularly concerned about the reports indicating that the opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has been almost doubled since 2012. It is a real threat for the Region and beyond and should be addressed by the international com-

munity. We welcome the regional initiatives taken by countries of the region, including China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and Iran to this end.

Strong support and commitment of the international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is essential to deter the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking. This is not only a major public health challenge but also, and more importantly, a main source of income for extremist and terrorist groups. Thus, the international community should specially support the Triangular Initiative on cooperation on countering narcotics among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. This is a useful initiative to benefit Afghanistan as well as transit and destination countries. Millions of Afghan refugees continue to live in Iran, drop in their voluntary repatriation underlines the importance of meeting the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan in order to reverse that trend, and underscores the necessity for mobilizing more international support for the host countries of Afghan refugees pending their repatriation.

We support UNAMA as well as UN agencies in their efforts to providing development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through a robust regional engagement on issues such as border security, immigration, return of refugees and drug control measures. The role of UNAMA should be further strengthened in the light of the important political as well as socio economic developments in Afghanistan. The future involvement of UNAMA is going to be deepened and strengthened, due to its unique role and multi-faceted and more complicated challenges.

Let me conclude, Mr. President by expressing my best wishes to the people of Afghanistan on the occasion of our and their, new year of Nowruz. I wish them peace and prosperity in the new year which starts on the first day of spring, as also proclaimed by the General Assembly resolution 64/253 as the International Day of Nowruz. (FNA)

(9) Iran, Afghanistan...

sides should set up an Iranology Center in the institute to further expand academic cooperation between the two countries.

Jahanshahi told IRNA that similar documents have been signed between Iran and some other provinces in Afghanistan. (IRNA)

(10) Security Up in...

Pajhwok Afghan News the city's security was maintained to the most extent.

Every year, Mazar-i-Sharif hosts a number of programmes celebrating the new Persian year. People from across the country visit Mazar-i-Sharif to attend the celebrations. Qaderi said security posts had been established after every 73 meters to ensure foolproof security and the Mazar-Kabul and the Mazar-Shiberghan highways were also under the security coverage.

He said illegal weapons were not allowed to be entered the city and even licensed weapons would be collected by police and returned to the carriers after the celebrations had ended.

Despite tight security measures, some resident of the city stressed that security organs should be more active and vigilant to deal with possible plots.

Mohammad Salim, a resident of the third police district, said the Taliban would try to disrupt the situation during the festival. (Pajhwok)

(11) 700 Arrested

one Iranian citizen, one Turkish, a Canadian, 20 women and 18 public servants and security men.

More than one tonne of heroin, half a tonne of morphine, 6.5 tonnes of opium, 1.5 tonnes of hashish, 3.5 tonnes of banned chemicals and more than 24,000 litres of alcoholic beverages were seized, he said.

Hussain Khel said 114 vehicles and 437 telephone sets were recovered from smugglers. An amount of cash received from smugglers has been deposited in the Pashtany Bank. (Pajhwok)

(12) UN Calls for ...

of the people and the government." He underlined the need for reforms in the electoral panels, calling them vital to restoring public trust in poll result and strengthening democracy.

Abdullah said his upcoming visit to the US was important for the long-term security and economic prosperity of Afghanistan. Efforts were ongoing to bring reforms to

the electoral commissions.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) spokesman said President Ghani and Saudi officials had agreed on economic, security and cultural cooperation.

Ahmad Shakib Mustaghni told journalists the two nations had agreed on developing a framework for coordination in this regard.

All ministries' spokespersons had been directed not to comment on the peace process, he added. Only spokespersons for the president and the High Peace Council are authorised to speak on the issue. (Pajhwok)

(13) University Entry...

made available on the ministry's website soon.

Up to 55,000 successful would be granted admissions in higher education institutes and 30,000 others in semi-higher.

MoHE officials had said around 30,000 successful students would be granted admission in public sector universities and about as many failing candidates introduced to semi-higher education institutes. (Pajhwok)

(14) Another 6...

the abducted people," he said.

However, unconfirmed reports suggest that four of the abductees were the Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers.

This has been the third incident within 24 days after the unknown armed men kidnapped 31 Hazaras on Kabul-Kandahar highway in Shah Joy district of Zabul followed by abduction of another 10 Hazaras in Ghazni. However, nine of Ghazni abductees were released three hours after the incident but the fate of rest of them is still unknown.

Despite the negotiations between the elders of Zabul and alleged abductors, the 31 abductees are yet to be freed, something many blame on newly-emerged Daesh group.

The Zabul abductees are said to be transferred to Khak Afghan district of Zabul where the security forces have killed more than 50 insurgents so far in the operation to rescue the hostages. (Tolonews)

(15) Anosh Suggests...

accused district officers of involvement in the sordid practice.

He said the Governor's House had sent several teams to the district to prevent illegal activities but failed, because a parliamentarian resisted their efforts.

District chief Ahmad Ali Hussaini confirmed the problems, saying there had been a quantum jump in illegal coalmine extraction over the past eight months.

Closing the tunnels was beyond local officials because powerful individuals were involved in the practice, he added.

Hussaini explained weighing machines were available at both coalmines in the district but trucks overloaded their vehicles -- to the detriment of the local economy. (Pajhwok)

(16) Pakistan's ...

Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another year.

The Security Council requested that the secretary-general initiate a process to conduct within six months a full examination of the role, structure and activities of all UN entities in Afghanistan. Tanin welcomed the request. "The process put forward in today's resolution will allow us to fully engage all stakeholders over the next six months through a new mechanism which will refine the framework of our partnership..."

Opening the debate, UNAMA head Nicholas Haysom referred to a number of significant developments that had brought renewed hope for an active peace process, including the formation of a national unity government. "These positive developments are testament to the efforts of President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah. Their collaborative leadership will remain essential for any peace talks to progress, for comprehensive electoral reforms to take hold, and for the implementation of the changes required to reinvigorate the economy," he added.

In her statement, US Ambassador Samantha Power commended Ghani and Abdullah's shared commitment to prioritizing electoral reform. (Pajhwok)

(17) Wardak Council ...

other officials were present on the occasion. Wardak said a majority of council members were present, paving the ground for holding the administrative board elections. Haji Ahmad Jafari was elected as head, Massoud Shneezai as deputy

and Nafisa Silay Wardak as secretary of the council. The board promised efforts for serving the people. (Pajhwok)

(18) Sharp Spike...

Afghanistan for poor cooperation in helping to track smugglers. In January alone, officials intercepted 44 kilograms of heroin from Afghan airports in eight separate cases, compared to 50 kilograms of heroin and hashish seized during the whole of last year, according to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) data. Most of the cases have involved passengers trying to board flights bound for the Indian capital New Delhi after swallowing as much 2 kg of the illegal opiate in capsules, like condoms. The spike is an "alarming trend," said Mark Colhoun, deputy representative to the UNODC in Afghanistan. (Reuters)

(19) Kabul to Host...

Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and the MoFA would represent Afghanistan in the meeting.

The technical teams would hold a pre-meeting discussion on technical issues concerning the pipeline project before the steering committee meeting, he said.

The committee meeting would discuss an agreement on their respective shares in the project, trade issues among the four countries and matters related to transparency in contract bidding, the spokesman said. (Pajhwok)

(20) Bamyán Journalists...

the law, it would be withdrawn.

Abdul Rahman Ahmadi, the governor's spokesperson, said the objective was not to limit the freedom of expression, but to create better coordination among local departments in providing accurate information to journalists. (Pajhwok)

(21) Police Commander...

in the explosion.

Meanwhile, Karwan posted his photographs on his social media account, showing injuries to his legs. He wrote: "I have recovered and would get better soon."

Hours earlier, Sheikhabad district police chief Col. Faizullah and two of his bodyguards were wounded in an overnight explosion. (Pajhwok)

(22) 3 Women Dead in...

the attack an un-Islamic action and said the governments should detain the perpetrators. A day earlier, gunmen opened fire on a public uprising commander in Pul-i-Alam city, the provincial capital. The commander survived and the attacker managed to escape. (Pajhwok)

(23) Search Launched ...

Afghan News militants had penetrated the protestors and they attempted to disarm policemen. Residents of Qarqin and Kham Ab districts have long been crossing the river into Turkmenistan in search of herbal plants used in medicines. The river is an international boundary between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Dr. Mohammad Haroon Arif Elbige, the public health director, said two of the injured were in critical conditions. (Pajhwok)

(24) 3 Laghman Cold ...

had the capacity to store 450 metric tonnes of agriculture produce, but they could not be made functional in the absence of electricity. (Pajhwok)

(25) 26 Insurgents Killed...

Operation Zulfikar was launched by hundreds of Afghan National Security Forces last month to clear target areas in Helmand province where more than 200 insurgents have been killed so far. The operation began from Sangin District, one of the restive Districts in Helmand province, but later extended to other Districts within Helmand. (KP)

(26) 6 Militants Killed; ...

Nangarhar province, four passengers were wounded when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb. The governor's spokesperson, Abdul Zia Abdulzai said the wounded were in stable condition. (Pajhwok)

(27) 75 Tonnes of ...

medical stores in search of expired drugs. "Expired drugs are still available in the market despite our efforts to do away with them," the minister acknowledged. Substandard and expired drugs are smuggled from Pakistan and Iran to Afghanistan due to a weak control over borders. (Pajhwok)

(28) Kidnapped Passen ...

at least six fighters were killed in the rescue operation. (Pajhwok)